

Message Text

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NEA - MR. ATHERTON

S/S - MR. BRIDGES

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 248419

EXDIS, FOR CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: CONTACTS WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS

REF: BEIRUT 7833

1. WE FULLY RECOGNIZE THE FRUSTRATIONS INHERENT IN PRE-SENT SITUATION WHERE CONTINUING STATE OF INSECURITY PREVENTS DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN SARKIS AND EMBASSY. NEVERTHELESS, YOU SHOULD NOT RPT NOT CONTEMPLATE CROSSING BEIRUT CONFRONTATION LINE UNTIL THERE IS DRAMATIC AND PALPABLE IMPROVEMENT IN SECURITY CONDITIONS. DESPITE "NEW MEASURES" ANNOUNCED TO FACILITATE CROSSINGS AT MUSEUM (PARA 2 REFTEL), THERE ARE PERSISTENT REPORTS OF SNIPER FIRE AND OTHER HAZARDS IN THAT VICINITY (PARA 4, REFTEL) AND WE NOTE SOME FACTIONS, INCLUDING MURABITOUN, HAVE PROCLAIMED CLOSURE OF CROSSING POINT.

2. WHILE A NUMBER OF DIPLOMATS HAVE, AS YOU POINT OUT, RECENTLY CROSSED TO CALL ON SARKIS, VULNERABILITY OF AMERICAN DIPLOMATS REMAINS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN FOR

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YOUR DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES. YOU SHOULD SEEK

APPOINTMENT WITH SARKIS IF HE COMES TO WEST BEIRUT, PROVIDED YOU ARE ABLE TO ARRANGE SECURITY ESCORT WHICH YOU CONSIDER ADEQUATE TO AND FROM MEETING PLACE. IF SARKIS SEEKS TO HOLD DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION FOR CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AT LOCATION IN CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED LEBANON, WE WOULD EXPECT OPPORTUNITY FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION, ALL OF WHOM ARE LOCATED IN WEST BEIRUT, TO COORDINATE AMONG THEMSELVES AND WITH LOCAL SECURITY AUTHORITIES RE ESCORTS AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS TO AND FROM RECEPTION SITE. IN LIGHT OF GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION AT THAT TIME AND YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF THOSE ARRANGEMENTS, WE WILL BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE QUESTION ON AN AD HOC BASIS AT THAT TIME.

3. WITH RESPECT TO ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE IN EAST BEIRUT, WE APPRECIATE THAT PROLONGED ABSENCE OF REGULAR CONTACT WITH PRESIDENT AND HIS OFFICE WILL HAVE DISADVANTAGES, PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH OUR EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THE CENTRAL POSITION OF SARKIS. WE ARE ALSO AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROBLEMS INHERENT IN CREATION OF A SEPARATE OFFICE CONTINUE TO EXIST. MOREOVER, WE WONDER WHETHER A JUNIOR OFFICER (AND ANY SUCH OFFICE WOULD HAVE TO BE STAFFED AT A MODEST LEVEL) COULD MAINTAIN THE CONTACT WITH SARKIS THAT YOU HAVE IN MIND. WE ARE NONETHELESS PREPARED TO TAKE A LOOK AT ANY SPECIFIC IDEAS YOU MAY HAVE. ROBINSON

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